



Tree Retention Regulations

Planning Commission
Follow Up

April 4, 2007

Background

- ◆ A year ago, staff brought this issues to the Planning Commission for discussion
- ◆ In January 2007, staff briefed the Planning Commission on current City policy and tree regulations
- ◆ We have discussed proposed code language and builder concerns with tree retention programs
- ◆ This is part of an on-going work program to maintain and improve Renton's tree canopy

Summary of Past Discussion

- ◆ There are good reasons for retaining trees and good reasons for removing trees
- ◆ Established neighborhoods and developing neighborhoods (or infill neighborhoods) may have different priorities in tree retention
- ◆ Comprehensive Plan provides broad support for tree retention and preservation
- ◆ RMC authorizes the City to require retention, but needs improvement
- ◆ 2006 Director's Rule has been used to interpret and implement RMC authority

Summary of Proposed Changes

- ◆ Remove lot development criteria from allowed minor renewal activities
- ◆ Retention Standard is 30% or 25 trees per acre for R-8 or lower intensity zones
- ◆ Replacement/Replanting requirement 12 caliper inches per tree replaced
- ◆ Allow third party review
- ◆ Add clarifying language throughout
- ◆ Amendments to create consistency between sections

Planning Commission Concerns

- ◆ Heritage trees should be considered, but the definition is problematic.
- ◆ Better criteria needs to be developed to define Heritage trees
- ◆ Staff removed the proposed definition of heritage tree
- ◆ Staff proposes keeping the criterion in 4-4-130 H4 which directs the Reviewing Official to...
"maximize the preservation of any tree in good health that is an outstanding specimen because of its size, form, shape, age, color, rarity, or other distinction as a community landmark."

Feedback from Builders

- ◆ Provided information from their National Organization for review
- ◆ Stressed the importance of flexibility
- ◆ Felt tree retention should be incentive based, not required
- ◆ Questioned reasonableness of retention and replacement standards

National Ass'n of Home Builders

- ◆ Acknowledges that tree retention increases real estate values, and, when appropriately implemented, lowers the cost of landscaping and decreases reliance on expensive nursery stock
- ◆ As a result, tree retention should not significantly affect the builder's ability to provide a product at the standard price point
- ◆ Warned against inflexible standards
- ◆ Proposed standards allow flexibility in which trees to retain and where to retain them; it also allows full replacement, and flexibility in where to replace and what to replace with

National Ass'n of Home Builders

- ◆ Authority to implement the standards should be clear
- ◆ Advocates for tree retention review that is concurrent with development application review
- ◆ Proposed code clarifies that the tree standards are implemented by the same authority that reviews the concurrent development application
- ◆ Provides the City with the ability to get outside review

National Ass'n of Home Builders

- ◆ Should clearly define what to protect, and argues that requiring minimum percentages of trees to protect is best for protecting groups of trees and diverse stands
- ◆ Notes that there are many different approaches, some highly complex, for tree replacement- but that the best approaches allow for the preservation of diverse stands and flexibility in replacing trees that must be removed
- ◆ Proposed standards are clearly established, allows diversity in size, age, and type of tree that can be retained or replaced; standard is based on a minimum percentage of trees

Reasonable Standards for Retention and Replacement

- ◆ Evaluated the standards in two proposed Plats
- ◆ Staff recommends allowing the required street trees to be counted toward the retention requirements
- ◆ Staff also recommends reducing the minimum retention standards to 20 trees per acre





Next Steps

- ◆ The Planning and Development Committee will review the proposal and the Planning Commission recommendation and then forward a final recommendation to the Council
- ◆ Larger issues relating to preserving Tree Canopy and related issues will be addressed as part of an on-going work program

